



Coalition for Smarter Growth

Better Communities...Less Traffic

November 16, 2003

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035-0079

Re: HOT Lanes Proposal for Beltway EIS

Dear Chairman Hanley and members of the Board,

We are writing to request your assistance in ensuring a thorough and public review of the Fluor-Daniel Beltway HOT lanes proposal by the Virginia Department of Transportation. VDOT has allowed this new alternative to be added very late in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process and we are concerned that it will not receive the thorough review it requires. We are equally concerned that a rail and land use alternative has not been studied within this EIS.

We continue to recommend the linking of rail transit to transit-oriented development and pedestrian friendly communities at all scales as the best regional approach to rising traffic congestion. Accordingly, our highest priority request is that you insist that VDOT also incorporate a rail and land use alternative into the EIS. This can build upon the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation rail study, but should use improved traffic modeling for pedestrian and transit trips and detailed transit station development scenarios. While HOT lanes/congestion pricing is worth researching for this corridor, we are concerned that it will continue to encourage very long-distance commuting and sprawl patterns of development and not have the benefits of helping to focus development, revitalize older commercial centers in Fairfax, nor encourage pedestrian, bicycle and transit trips. We therefore think it essential to look at the relative benefits and effects of the two different approaches.

In addition, we ask that you request that a number of questions be answered about the Fluor-Daniel proposal:

- 1) What is the true total cost of the proposal including both Phase 1 and Phase 2, incorporating all required interchange upgrades, connecting arterial expansion, and transit funding? By separating the project into two phases, the real cost may be understated.
- 2) What is the conceptual interchange design for all interchanges and cost? Will these interchanges work for both auto and BRT/express bus service? What will be the impact on takings of homes?
- 3) Why does the proposal not provide funding for transit service within the corridor? In order to meet transit needs and to reduce congestion, what will it cost to provide additional bus

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service up to and including BRT service (including buses, salaries and benefits, and other operational costs)?

- 4) Will the state be required to pay for operations and maintenance of the HOT lanes facility?
- 5) Will the "non-compete" clause limit the ability of state and local government to provide bus service in the corridor or to add parallel rail transit service for as long as the 30 year life of the bonds?
- 6) Does VDOT intend to construct a region-wide network of HOT lanes in conjunction with MDOT? What effect will the HOT lanes have on long-distance commuting and development on the fringes of the region?
- 7) What effect will the HOT lanes have on air pollution and on traffic demand on the connecting arterial roads?

In considering HOT lanes, we also ask that HOT lane alternatives to the Fluor-Daniel "4-new lanes" proposal be considered. This includes "add one lane/take one lane" and the "FAIR lanes" concepts enumerated in the Beltway congestion pricing study authored by Patrick De-Corla Souza of the Federal Highway Administration.

Finally, we are concerned that the signing of a Public-Private Transportation Act contract with Fluor-Daniel or any contractor will tend to pre-judge the outcome of any EIS in favor of the PPTA proposal. This is due to factors that include the perception that the contractor is bringing something to the public at little cost to the state, to the mere signing of a contract, and to the enormous sums that the contractor spends in making the case for their alternative -- sums often much larger than the state or a third party could spend on developing and analyzing other alternatives.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this proposal and its relative costs and benefits compared to other approaches for improving access to jobs and services within Fairfax and northern Virginia.

Sincerely,

(sent via email)

Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director